

disappeared. But it is a characteristic feature of Semitic languages that most roots have three consonants in them. This is so prevalent throughout Semitic languages, it is a definite characteristic of them.

#3 Changes in term. That is to say the changes to express time and similar relationships are made by changing the vowels between the consonants as well as by adding something at the end.

In Most of English today your changes are made by adding to the beginning or to the end. The middle stays practically the same. We have some old words in English in which changes are made in the middle, like I write, I wrote, I have written. I started to say I bite, I bote, I have bitten! But it shows how very irregular English is, and hardly two words follow the same rule! I see, I saw, I have seen. We have very common words which have preserved these changes of vowel, but most of our words, we simply add something at the end.

But in Hebrew, and in all semitic languages, you say, Katal, he killed; kotel, killing; katul, being killed; ketol, impv. kill. The internal changes affect the form of the word.

#4 It is typical of semitic languages to have two tenses. We have 6 or 8 in English, and have quite a large number in Greek. But in English, you know we have only the perfect and the imperfect tense. Infin. and part. are something different. To have only two tenses, and in many semitic languages, as in Hebrew, the tenses do not express time but state. This is one thing that makes semitic languages confusing for someone who has never studied any of them before.

In Heb. the perfect may be past, present, or future. The imperfect may be past, present, or future because the perfect shows something completed. Its completed in the past; completed in the present, or completed in the future. The imperfect in action occurs. It occurs in the past. It occurs now. It occurs in the future. It shows the type of action -- the state, rather than actually the time.

Of course in most cases future is expressed in imperfect. In most cases past events are expressed with the perfect, or with the imperf. with the waw conversive which is the same time. Thus there is a great difference in the meaning of tenses which is to quite an extent typical of semitic languages.

#5 The Use of the Construct.

Another thing that is brand new for you to learn when you learn any semitic language, but it is found in all of them. In Latin they say the son (one word) of the king (a second word.) In Heb. they say "the son of" and then "the king." That is to say adding the first form of two words which are bound together in this way has the change in it instead of the second as in Indo-European languages. Of course in English we simple but another word in the middle, and leave them both the same. But that's a rather recent development. In Old English it followed the same pattern as Latin.

So the use of the construct form is a very common feature of Semitic languages.